

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9790
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 1368

MEXICO AND SAN JOSE FOR DEA

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SNAR, HO
SUBJ: FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN HONDURAN DRUG CASE

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 1243 (DTG 101849Z MAR 78), (B) TEGUCIGALPA
1180 (DTG 071730Z MAR 78) (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: ARMED FORCES COMMANDER, GENERAL POLICARPO PAZ, AND
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE CHIEF, LT. COL. LEONIDAS TORRES ARIAS, CALLED
PRESS CONFERENCE MARCH 15 TO PROVIDE FIRST RESULTS OF ONGOING
MILITARY INVESTIGATION INTO DISAPPEARANCE OF FERRARI COUPLE/
NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING CASE (REF A). AT THE SAME TIME, PRESS AND
RADIO WERE ALLOWED TO INTERVIEW JOSE DIMAS REYES IN SAN PEDRO
SULA JAIL. HE ADMITTED TAKING PART IN KIDNAPPING AND PROVIDED
DETAILS. IN GENERAL, STORY AS PROVIDED BY SURVIVOR OF ATTEMPTED
MURDER (REF B) IS CONFIRMED, ALTHOUGH DIMAS REYES MAY NOT BE
TELLING COMPLETE TRUTH. HE HAS ACCUSED AT LEAST ONE MILITARY OF-
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FICER OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING, BUT ALSO DENIED THAT HE WAS EVER
A MEMBER OF POLICE OR G-2. DIMAS REYES ALSO DENIED ANY MILITARY
INVOLVEMENT IN THE FERRARI KIDNAPPING. ACCORDING TO GENERAL
PAZ, THE GOH, THROUGH INTERPOL, HAS ASKED COLOMBIAN POLICE FOR
HELP IN LOCATING PERSONS WHO ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE FLED THERE.
END SUMMARY.

2. JOSE DIMAS REYES LAZO, A 27-YEAR-OLD FORMER BODYGUARD OF RAMO MATA (OR MATTA) BALLESTEROS, SPOKE TO THE PRESS MARCH 15 IN SAN PEDRO SULA, AND PROVIDED NUMEROUS DETAILS ON FERRARI KIDNAPPING. HE CLAIMED IT WAS ORDERED BY MATA FOR VENGEANCE BECAUSE THE FERRARI'S HAD DRUGGED MATA'S WIFE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS AND PASSED HER FAVORS AROUND TO THEIR FRIENDS DURING MATA'S OFTEN LONG ABSENCES IN COLOMBIA. MATA'S ORDERS TO KIDNAP THE FERRAIRI'S WERE ALLEGEDLY PASSED THROUGH ERNESTO SUAREZ, A CUBAN WHO MANAGES A MATRA-OWNED TOBACCO PLANTATION IN DANLI, AND ALEX EMILIO OLIVIA, WHO CONTRACTED DIMAS REYES, RAUL MATA RODRIGUEZ, HORACIO MEDINA REYES AND PAULINO MEDINA REYES TO CARRY OUT THE CRIME. EARLY IN THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 2, 1977, THE COUPLE WAS TAKEN AND DRIVEN TO A DIRT AIRFIELD OUTSIDE TEGUCIGALPA WHERE A SIX-PASSENGER AIRPLANE PILOTED BY ASDRUBAL ROJAS FASQUELLE (AKA CHESPIRITO) WAS WAITING. ACCORDING TO DIMAS REYES, THE CONTRACT CALLED FOR DELIVERY ALIVE. NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID HE BELIEVED THE COUPLE IS PROBABLY NOW DEAD.

3. ASKED IF HE WERE A MEMBER OF THE POLICE OR ARMY INTELLIGENCE, DIMAS REYES DENIED IT CATEGORICALLY. HE ALSO SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THAT THE ARMED FORCES, AS SUCH, HAD NO INVOLVEMENT IN THE FERRARI AFFAIR, THAT IT WAS A GANGLAND VENGEANCE. HE DID CLAIM THAT FERRARI HAD ONCE NAMED COL. RAMOS REYES SANCHEZ AND HIS WIFE AS HAVING SERVED AS "MULES." COL. REYES HAS DENIED THE CHARGE.

4. ACCORDING TO DIMAS REYES, THE FERRARI'S WERE HEAVILY INVOLVED
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IN COCAINE TRAFFICKING, WHILE RAMON MATA WAS AN EMERALD SMUGGLER AND LEADER OF A WELL-ESTABLISHED GANG. DIMAS REYES ALSO DESCRIBED THE MURDER OF JOSE ZUNIGA MADRID, AN APPARENTLY INNOCENT BYSTANDER WHO SAW TOO MUCH, AND THE ATTEMPTED MURDER OF CARLOS FELIPE MADRID. DIMAS REYES MAINTAINS THAT THIS WAS UNPLANNED AND THE RESULT OF MIXING DRINK AND MARIJUANA. GENERAL PAZ, IN HIS STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, FRANKLY ADMITTED THAT IT WAS THE SECOND CRIME WHICH PROVIDED INVESTIGATORS WITH SUFFICIENT LEADS TO RESOLVE THE FERRARI MYSTERY.

5. PAZ AND TORRES ARIAS PRESS CONFERENCE, WHICH WAS BROADCAST IN ITS ENTIRETY, SEEMED MORE RELAXED THAN THE PREVIOUS ONE. TORRES ARIAS DID MOST OF THE TALKING AND PROVIDED A DETAILED RESUME OF WHAT WAS, IN EFFECT, DIMAS REYES' CONFESSION. PAZ ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT OF ALL THOSE IMPLICATED IN THE KIDNAPPING, ONLY DIMAS REYES HAD BEEN CAPTURED, BUT THAT THE GOA WAS ACTIVELY SEEKING THE FUGITIVES AND HAD ASKED COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES FOR HELP IN LOCATING THOSE WHO MIGHT BE THERE.

6. COMMENT: IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT THIS ELABORATE KIDNAPPING WAS ARRANGED SOLELY FOR REVENGE OR THAT MATA IS ONLY AN EMERALD SMUGGLER. WHAT IS EVIDENT IS THAT A LARGE, WELL-FINANCED

ORGANIZATION, OF WHICH THE FERRARI'S WERE MEMBERS, WAS OPERATING HONDURAS. WHILE THE SERIOUS TONE OF THE PAZ/TORRES ARIAS PRESS CONFERENCE MAY HAVE ALLAYED SOME CONCERNS AND ANSWERED SOME QUESTIONS, MANY MORE REMAIN IN THIS STILL POTENTIALLY SERIOUS ISSUE POLITICALLY. THIS EXTRAORDINARY CASE CONTINUES TO CAPTURE PUBLIC INTEREST, AND THE PRESS, ESPECIALLY TIEMPO, HAS NOT SLACKENED ITS CALL FOR MORE INFORMATION AND FOR A CLEAN-UP OF THE HONDURAN CONNECTION.

JARAMILLO

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